

Newton Citizen's Commission on Energy

Minutes of Meeting of Wednesday August 23, 2017, 7:30 p.m.

City Hall Cafeteria

Present: Eric Olson, Chairman, Halina Brown, Michael Gevelber, Ira Krepchin, Jon Kantar, Jim Purdy; Cory Alperstein, Ed Craddock, Claudine Ellyn

Chairman Eric Olson called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. The minutes of the July 2017 meeting were reviewed and approved with revisions.

1. Update on Community Choice Aggregation contract with Peregrine

Jim and Halina gave a brief update; the contract scope is close to 100%.

Ed suggested that when the program is rolled out, people should have sufficient time to opt out before receiving the first bill at the default level.

Cory noted that the public outreach needs to give residents some background on the purpose of renewable energy so they can make an informed decision on what level of green power they may wish to be in when the program begins.

Issues for lower income residents were also discussed. Members felt that there needs to be some provision other than simply opting out altogether. (The Peregrine contract scope provides for addressing this issue.

2 Update on "Willingness to Pay" green power survey

There was discussion on how to structure the survey. Michael suggested that the willingness to pay question might be posed in terms of both the potential cost for alternative percentages of green energy and the percentage increase in the person's current average bill.

The people working on the survey include Halina, Michael, Cory, Claudine, and Jim. They are planning to conduct the survey in September, probably on Saturday September 16. Survey volunteers are needed. Green Newton will act as the sponsor, and there will be participation from Mothers Out Front and others who are participating in the aggregation group chaired by Cory.

3. Conversation with Bill Ferguson on summer efficiency efforts in Newton Public Buildings

Eric reported on the work being managed by Bill Ferguson. The grant for third round was reduced to \$186k and cost will be reduced accordingly by removing one of the five schools slated for work. The city did work on Newton North High School this summer.

Modeled performance estimates for the high school excluded the basement floor. Jon noted that as part of the work that was done they replaced the controls that were eliminated previously. Ira noted that maintenance cost savings for the LED lighting estimated total savings with reduced energy cost and longer bulb life is \$151k.

Jon noted that the City doesn't use the money in the enterprise fund from incentives and cost savings for future energy efficiency projects. Michael said that the NCCE should get a report on how the city is spending the money saved in reduced energy costs. Some councilors say "you can't spend savings.

Jim noted that Councilor Crossley has raised this issue in the past

Eric proposed that we should prepare an estimate of how much has been saved by these improvements to date and raise the issue of dedicating it to further efforts in the future.

The solar array at Rumford Avenue was turned on July 12, with no public announcement.

Bill Ferguson says they are committed to calculating actual energy use at the new Angier School based on a year of data. Jon noted that an air infiltration test was not done for cost reasons even though the overall project came in under budget and money was returned to MSBA.

The City is taking the initiative to explore new energy sources, e.g. ground source thermal. A grant from DOER has been announced – Cory will send the RFP to members . Claudine might be willing to be the volunteer coach.

Jon noted that the engineer for library expansion recommended ground source heat pumps be considered for lowest life cycle cost.

4. The Eversource rate request's potential impacts on solar projects. Ten public hearings have been held, no more are planned. The DPU is expected to make public a decision on the rate request in December. Newton has joined other communities in protesting Eversource's request.

Claudine noted that the net metering ceiling was not raised last year, putting several solar developers out of business. This will lead to a 40% reduction in municipal solar.

Ed asked what about Global Warming Solutions Act? Eric noted that the MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER) have increased their planned efforts to meet the Act's goals.

5. Just in: 2016 Eversource electricity consumption data for City of Newton residential, commercial/institutional, government sectors.

Based on this data, overall consumption in all sectors increased about 1% from 2013 to 2016. Residential usage increased 1.9% (uncorrected for degree days).

6. Other business

Eric noted that the states participating in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) just agreed to raise their goal – 30% reduction below 2020 level in emissions by 2030.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m. Respectfully submitted, Jim Purdy.